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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1768
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2230
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2535
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000637

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA
ALSO FOR A/S SILVERBERG AND PDAS WARLICK
USUN FOR KHALILZAD/WOLFF/KUMAR/PHEE
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [EAIR](#) [SA](#) [IR](#) [UNSC](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: DISCUSSIONS WITH SAAD HARIRI, TELECOM
MINISTER; BEIRUT PORT CLOSED

REF: A. BEIRUT 634
[1](#)B. BEIRUT 635

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Between 1100 and 1200 on May 9, the Charge spoke to March 14 leader Saad Hariri and Telecommunications Minister Marwan Hamadeh. Saad and Hamadeh both described the situation as "Iran having taken over." Saad told the Charge that Lebanon's democratic forces are at stake and that the U.S. should do "something" to Syria. Hamadeh said that the government has not given up and its leaders have distributed themselves to several locations, while considering relocating the seat of government to a city north of Beirut. Separately, the Beirut Port has preemptively shut itself down to avoid being occupied by Hizballah, and the Lebanese Armed Forces have surrounded the area. End summary.

SAAD IMPLORING FOR U.S. SUPPORT

[1](#)2. (C) The Charge spoke to Future Movement/March 14 leader Saad Hariri at 1115 on May 9. (Note: She successfully reached him after several attempts; he had been resting after spending the night holed up with Future Movement members at his Qoreitam residence. End note.) Saad stated, "Iran has taken over" (Refs A, B). He told the Charge that he had warned earlier that Lebanon would "have another Gaza and now we do. Lebanon has awoken to find Iran is taking over."

[1](#)3. (C) The Charge reassured Hariri that the U.S. is with him and the moderates, and with the Lebanese people. Although Hizballah may have taken over some locations positionally, she continued, those who want a democratic Lebanon are with Saad and March 14. Responding to Charge's inquiry about his safety at Qoreitam, Saad confirmed that a rocket had hit the outer perimeter of his residence but noted that there were no casualties or injuries.

[1](#)4. (C) The Charge told Saad she had spoken to French Ambassador Andre Parant, who had suggested that the U.S., France, and other partners make a statement of support for the government of Lebanon, including firm insistence that Hizballah and other opposition supporters avoid attacks on the homes and compounds of the political leaders and personalities.

¶15. (C) Saad responded that such statements were fine and that he was sure that those who are attacking the government will pay the price at the end of the day. However, he stressed, these statements are "short-term solutions." For the long-term, Saad continued, he had no doubt that the Charge's statements of support were true and that the U.S. supports him and the democratic forces in Lebanon. However, Saad said, there is now a "coup d'etat on the Lebanese institutions, constitution, everything that democracy stands for in Lebanon.

¶16. (C) The Charge asked what Saad needed to see at this moment from the U.S. He said that March 14 was experiencing pressure from Syria and Iran. Since his Future Movement supporters are not a militia, they will not fight, but at the same time, they will not surrender either. The bottom line is, he stressed, the U.S. needs to "do something to Syria."

BEIRUT PORT SHUT ITSELF DOWN

¶17. (C) Defense Attache's contact at the Beirut Port Syndicate told us that earlier in the day (May 9) the head of the Port Union had asked Hizballah not to enter the port with tents, saying that he would rather preemptively shut down the port than be occupied. As of 1200, the port has shut itself down and the LAF has reinforced the area.

TELECOM MINISTER:
"TEHRAN ON THE MEDITERRANEAN"

BEIRUT 00000637 002 OF 002

¶18. (C) At 1200 the Charge spoke with Minister of Telecommunications Marwan Hamadeh. He described Beirut as "Tehran on the Mediterranean," adding, "Iran had taken over." The Charge urged Hamadeh to think more positively; although the situation was serious, the moderate forces in Lebanon and the outside world support the legitimate government of Lebanon headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

¶19. (C) "No, no, we're not giving up," Hamadeh responded. "We have distributed ourselves to several locations and if we have to conduct the legitimate business from Tripoli or Jounieh (cities north of Beirut), we will," he assured the Charge. His fellow Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt, has departed his Beirut residence but is fine, said Hamedeh.

¶10. (C) He said that he and other government ministers were concerned about the actions of Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) Commander Michel Sleiman. "Are his actions caution or collusion?" he asked. The Cabinet had sent Defense Minister Elias Murr to see Sleiman last night, Hamadeh said, but after the meeting, Murr had responded in an SMS cellphone text message to the entire Cabinet, "No change."

¶11. (C) The Charge mentioned the appalling rumor circulating around Beirut that PM Siniora would announce his resignation tonight. Hamadeh said Siniora's resolve remained firm. "Siniora wouldn't do something like that unless our Saudi allies asked him to," Hamadeh added.

SISON